

Urarina language

Urarina is an isolated language spoken in Peru, specifically in the Loreto Region of Northwest Peru, by the Urarina people.^[4] There are around 3,000 speakers in Urarinas District (along the Chambira River).^[2] It uses a Latin script. It is also known as Itucali, Simacu or Shimacu.^[2]

It has a canonical word order of object–verb–subject.^{[5][6]}

Contents
Classification
Language contact
Status
Phonology
Consonants
Vowels
Grammar
Vocabulary
References
Further reading

Classification

The question of which language family Urarina belongs to is a controversial one among linguists as the language has been placed in a multitude of phyla by academics including Panoan, Tupian, Macro-Tucanoan, and Amerind. As of present, none of the proposals have any convincing linguistic arguments, and given the lack of resemblance Urarina has to any languages in the same area lexically or grammatically it is usually assumed that it is a language isolate.^[7]

Language contact

Jolkesky (2016) notes that there are lexical similarities with the Arawak, Leko, and Omurano language families due to contact.^[8]

Status

Urarina	
Itucale	
Native to	Peru
Region	Loreto Region, Urarinas District along the Chambira River ^[1]
Ethnicity	Urarina people
Native speakers	3,000 (2002) ^[2]
Language family	Macro-Jibaro ? <div>▪ Urarina</div>
Writing system	Latin
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	ura
Glottolog	urar1246 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/urar1246) ^[3]



Urarina is presently spoken by around 3,000-2,000 members of the Urarina tribe. Although the majority of individuals still have the ability to speak the language, there is growing bilingualism and usage of Spanish in everyday life, as more and more Spanish-speaking mestizos have immigrated to the valley where the Urarina live. In addition the Urarina spoken by the younger generations has lost a large amount of the grammatical complexity and vocabulary the language once had, which is correlated to the loss of traditional cultural practices and beliefs. As such the language is considered vulnerable to endangered.^[7]

Phonology

The following is the phonology of Urarina as described by Olawsky.^[7]

Consonants

		<u>Bilabials</u>	<u>Dentals</u>	<u>Retroflexives</u>	<u>Palatals</u>	<u>Velars</u>	<u>Glottals</u>
<u>Occlusives</u>	<u>Voiceless</u>		t /t/			k /k/	
	<u>Voiced</u>	b /b/	d /d/				
	<u>Labials</u>					kw /k ^w /	
<u>Fricatives</u>	<u>Voiceless</u>		s /s/		sh /ʃ/		h /h/
	<u>Labials</u>	f ^w /f ^w /					
	<u>Palatalization</u>				hj /h ^j /		
<u>Affricatives</u>					ts /t͡s/		
<u>Nasals</u>		m /m/	n /n/		ng /ŋ/		
<u>Liquids</u>			l /l/	r /ɾ/			

Vowels

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	i /i/	ɨ /ɨ/	u /u/
<u>Mid</u>	e /e/		
<u>Open</u>		a /a/	

Grammar

Urarina has several interesting grammatical characteristics that are rather rare in other languages throughout the world. The language follows the OVS word order, and of all the languages that do follow it Urarina has been noted as the language that most strictly adheres to this word order in speech.^[7] Another feature of Urarina is its complex person marking on all verbs (excluding borrowings). Every verb is marked according to three different paradigms which rely on a complicated set of pragmatic and syntactic conditions that must be adhered to.^[7]

Urarina also follows an equally unique and complicated word class system. For example, numerals and adjectives that are borrowed from Quechua and Spanish are placed in a completely separate class from indigenous words. Urarina also follows syntactic rules where the pitch-accent system changes the tone of a word, based on the preceding word class.^[7] All these features make Urarina unique and distinct from other neighboring languages and has recently developed a special interest from linguists.^[7]

Aside from its more distinctive features, Urirana also follows a polysynthetic agglutinate word morphology in relating to verbs similar to other Amazonian languages. Many of Urarina's unique grammatical features are gradually disappearing as younger generations speak a Urarina that is being influenced by a growing bilingualism in Spanish.^[7]

Vocabulary

Loukotka (1968) lists the following basic vocabulary items for Itucale.^[1]

gloss	Itucale
one	exlehé
two	kuradzá
head	kuxterí
eye	idichú
woman	ení
fire	öxsí
sun	enotú
maize	kaxturí
house	luredí
white	dzumaré

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Further reading

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